

BBC French Service broadcast journalist , Madeleine Jay, reviews the multi-national production of Jean Genet's `The Balcony` in London, June 1981 performed by New Internationalist Theatre (later known as Internationalist Theatre)

" Et S'ils sont aussi vivants et revelateurs de jeunes talents que le Balcon de Genet present ....on ne peut que s'en rejouir. ....

L'atmosphere louche et malsaine est tres bien recreee par le New Internationalist Theatre..."

July 23rd 1981.

THE STAGE

**Tailormade**  
**theatre**

NEW INTERNATIONALIST  
THEATRE

**The Balcony**

VERY OFTEN "international" and "multi-national" are words which serve to disguise good intentions and fallible practice. Genet's play is perhaps a rare example of theatre tailormade for such casting, but this production of the Bernard Frechtman translation deserves praise on purely artistic grounds.

Patrick Kealey has, perhaps, been less concerned to strip away the layers of sexual, political and spiritual deceit of the original than to filter them through the sieve of imaginative staging. He relies on lighting (Jan Sendor) and sound (Roy Weskin and Sion Evans) to suggest the carnal oasis which Mme Irma's house of illusions represents amid civil slaughter. Ann Hubbard's costumes emphasise this.

Ellen Thomas' Irma is a very fine portrait of the woman of foul business, and the company's administrative director Angelique Rockas fires off her as Carmen, croaking for a hapless child. Jonathan Oliver, Ray Charleson and Kenneth Hadley also loom shadow-large in this particular room sequence of mirrors.

Anne Morley-Priestman



MORE unorthodox, female specimens but not wholesome ones in Genet's *The Balcony* (Theatre Space, till July 12). Irma (played by the excellent Ellen Thomas) is the proprietor of a house of fantasy where men, of course, come to play out their dreams (with Rosie, Carmen and the other girls) in the rôles they cannot play in real life — as The Bishop, The Judge, The General, The Executioner, The Chief of Police.

The New Internationalist Theatre's production uses Theatre Space to its limits. Characters are not restricted to just the stage area; they leap out of the wall, appear from the audience, so that there is little or no separation between players and spectators. We all become voyeurs participating in Genet's games. The surroundings at Theatre Space conspire to enhance the atmosphere of sleaze, a quality that eluded the last London production of *The Balcony* by the RSC.

**Michael Darvell**